

**Categorical Exclusion Documentation Format for Actions Other Than Hazardous Fuels  
and Fire Rehabilitation Actions**

**Iberdrola Renewable Big Horn Solar Monitoring Station Land Use Permit Renewal  
DOI-BLM-AZ-P0100-2012-006-CX**

**A. Background**

BLM Office: Hassayampa Field Office (HFO)

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: AZA-34821 (Parent file (AZA-34424)

Proposed Action Title/Type: Big Horn Solar Monitoring Station – LUP Renewal

Location of Proposed Action: T. 3 N., R. 10 W., Section 14 SESW

Description of Proposed Action: This is a renewal of the LUP for a solar monitoring station for the proposed Iberdrola Big Horn utility scale solar project for parent file AZA-34424 – Big Horn Solar Application. The solar monitoring station was installed approximately 3 years ago and covers a small area of less than 0.25 acres or approximately 10m by 10m which is enclosed with fencing consistent with local grazing practices.

**B. Land Use Plan Conformance**

Land Use Plan (LUP) Name: Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved/Amended: 4/10/2010

☐ The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s):

x ☐ The proposed action is in conformance with the LUP, even though it is not specifically provided for, because it is clearly consistent with the following LUP decision(s) (objectives, terms, and conditions):

LR-24. Continue to issue land use authorizations (rights-of-way, leases, permits, easements) on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with resource management prescriptions in this land use plan. (pg. 33)

**C: Compliance with NEPA:**

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with 516 Departmental Manual (DM) 11.9: (E)(19) states: "Issuance of short-term (3 years or less) rights-of-way or land use authorizations for such uses as storage sites, apiary sites, and construction sites where the proposal includes rehabilitation to restore the land to its natural or original condition."

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 11.9 apply.

I have considered: The installation of solar observation equipment allows the proponent to record data that may include measurements of strength and duration of solar irradiance, unattended normal incidence direct solar radiation and more. After a sufficient measurement period of at least 3 years, the proponent will consolidate this information, having further reviewed the physical, environmental, and transmission aspects of the site, to make an informed decision on whether to pursue more in-depth solar project development activities.

**D: Signature**

**Review:** *We have determined that the proposal is in accordance with the categorical exclusion criteria and that it would not involve any significant environmental effects (see Attachment 1). Therefore, it is categorically excluded from further environmental review.*

**Prepared by:** \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_

**Kathleen Depukat  
Project Manager**

**Reviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_

**Leah Baker  
Planning & Environmental Coordinator**

**Approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_

**Elroy Masters  
Acting Field Manager**

**Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact:

**Kathleen Depukat, 623-580-5681 or [kdepukat@blm.gov](mailto:kdepukat@blm.gov).**

**Note:** A separate decision document must be prepared for the action covered by the CX.

BLM Categorical Exclusions: Extraordinary Circumstances<sup>1</sup>

**Attachment 1**

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| The action has been reviewed to determine if any of the extraordinary circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) apply. The project would:   |   |  |
| 1. Have significant impacts on public health or safety  |   |  |
| <b>Yes</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> The project would not have significant impacts on public health or safety because has used existing roads to transport the equipment for the solar monitoring station so ground impact should be minimal. The solar irradiance equipment covers a small area of less than 0.25 acres or approximately 10 meters long by 10 meters wide which is enclosed with fencing consistent with local grazing practices. |
| 2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness or wilderness study areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas? |   |  |
| <b>Yes</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> None of the above concerns are applicable to this project.   |
| 3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)]?   |   |  |
| <b>Yes</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> The solar irradiance monitoring equipment is standard for solar projects and is does not have any highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources. This is a renewal of equipment that was installed approximately three years ago, is fully enclosed, and is monitored remotely.  |
| 4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?  |   |  |
| <b>Yes</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> This project is a renewal of a radiometer installation that was constructed three years ago. There have been no unpredictable environmental risks with the current equipment during the past 3 years and none are expected during the next couple of years that the equipment will be on site.   |
| 5. Establish a precedent for future action, or represent a decision in principle about future actions, with potentially significant environmental effects?  |   |  |
| <b>Yes</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><br><input type="checkbox"/>           | <b>Rationale:</b> The installation of the solar irradiance equipment would not have significant impacts. However, in the future, if the data   |

<sup>1</sup> If an action has any of these impacts, you must conduct NEPA analysis.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/>              | collected from this equipment is favorable to the construction of a utility scale solar facility, then additional NEPA would be necessary on the entire project.  |
| 6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?  |   |   |
| <b>Yes</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>           | <b>Rationale:</b> The installation of the solar irradiance equipment would not have significant cumulative impacts. However, in the future, if the data collected from this equipment is favorable to the construction of a utility scale solar facility, then additional NEPA would be necessary on the entire project.  |
| 7. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the Bureau or office?                                     |   |   |
| <b>Yes</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> Cultural clearance (a pedestrian survey) was conducted on 10/30/08 by Christopher McLaughlin for this project. The proposed 10m x 10m fenced project areas and planned access roads were surveyed for cultural resource purposes. This is a renewal application and the project is monitored remotely so no further disturbance has occurred.   |
| 8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species? |   |   |
| <b>Yes</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> A field visit to the site was conducted on October 9, 2008 by Tim Hughes, ex-Lead Wildlife Biologist for the PDO. The project would have no effect on any listed, proposed or candidate species. There are no special status species that inhabit this area. Impacts to other wildlife and habitat would be negligible. The project would not impact migratory birds. The area does not constitute habitat for Sonoran desert tortoise or any other state sensitive species. This project is a renewal and no additional disturbance is expected. The project information was reviewed by Codey Carter on 11/21/11. |
| 9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?  |   |   |
| <b>Yes</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> This action does not violate any Federal, State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. This is a renewal application that does not involve any action that will involve the resources for this site. Due to the absence of larger trees in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site, the proposed action would not result in take of any migratory birds. Vegetative clearing would be minimal and anticipated impacts to vegetation and wildlife habitat would be negligible.   |
| 10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?  |   |   |
| <b>Yes</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>  | <b>No</b><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> No low income or minority populations will be effected by this proposed action.   |
| 11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by   |   |   |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Indian religious practitioners, or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?   |   |  |
| <b>Yes</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>   | <b>No</b><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> This site does not contain any ceremonial or sacred sites used by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.                |
| 12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area, or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)? |   |  |
| <b>Yes</b><br><input type="checkbox"/>   | <b>No</b><br><b>xx</b> <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Rationale:</b> Because the site has no access and is monitored remotely, the project does not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species. |

**Decision**  
**Attachment 2**

**Project Description:**

This is a renewal of the LUP for a solar monitoring station for the proposed Iberdrola Big Horn project on parent file AZA-34424 – Big Horn Solar Energy Project Application. The solar monitoring station was installed approximately 3 years ago.

**Decision:** Based on a review of the project described above and field office staff recommendations, I have determined that the project is in conformance with the land use plan and is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis. It is my decision to approve the action as proposed, with the following stipulations (if applicable).

1. All applicable regulations in accordance with 43 CFR 2920.
2. Any cultural and/or paleontological resource (historic or prehistoric site or object) discovered by the holder, or any person working on his behalf, on public or federal land shall be immediately reported to the authorized officer. Holder shall suspend all operations in the immediate area of such discovery until written authorization to proceed is issued by the authorized officer. An evaluation of the discovery will be made by the authorized officer to determine appropriate actions to prevent the loss of significant cultural or scientific values. The holder will be responsible for the cost of evaluation and any decision as to proper mitigation measures will be made by the authorized officer after consulting with the holder.

**Approved By:** \_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_12/15/2011\_\_

**Elroy Masters**  
**Acting Field Manager**